

Parroting Washington, Chile's President Boric denounces Palestinian uprising as "terrorist"

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Mass demonstrations have erupted across the Middle East and internationally in support of the latest Palestinian uprising against Israel's criminal apartheid system and against the fascist Netanyahu regime's campaign of collective punishment in the Gaza Strip, the world's largest open-air concentration camp.

Continuing demonstrations are also taking place across Europe and North and South America, demanding an end to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, its herding millions into ghettos without access to water, electricity, food, medications and to the outside world, and its indiscriminate killing of defenseless people in a seven-decade war of attrition. This is despite the governments of the major imperialist powers moving to criminalize these protests, while turning a blind eye to Israel's flagrant crimes against humanity.

Standing reality on its head, the US, Germany, France, Italy and the UK issued a joint communiqué on October 9 expressing their "steadfast and united support to the State of Israel, and our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism."

This banding together of imperialists behind their militarized bulwark in the Middle East is par for the course. All of them have centuries of accumulated experience in subjugating colonial and semi-colonial nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America—each power having individually committed unspeakable atrocities, laying waste to whole societies and ending the lives of millions.

But what accounts for the Chilean government shamelessly regurgitating the imperialists' slander of the Palestinian struggle as terrorist and their subsequent silence before Israel's razing of schools, hospitals and residential apartments, its targeted murder of journalists and paramedics and the dispatching of the IDF into Gaza? Its hostile position is all the more significant since Chile is home to half a million Palestinians, the largest concentration outside of the Middle East.

On October 8, the government of Chile expressed "its absolute condemnation of the attacks that occurred today against a number of towns and cities in Israel," referring to the actions of the Palestinians as "violent terrorist attacks."

Foreign Minister Alberto van Klaveren added that "the use of force against civilians is never acceptable in armed conflict, even in the exercise of self-defense. We call on all parties involved in acts of violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories to respect that basic principle."

On October 10, Chilean President Gabriel Boric went further, equating the actions of Hamas with the repressive apparatus of the

Israeli state:

Our solidarity is and will always be with the victims of violence, without distinction. ... We condemn without qualification the brutal attacks, murders and kidnappings by Hamas. Nothing can justify them or relativize their most energetic rejection. We also condemn the indiscriminate attacks against civilians carried out by the Israeli army in Gaza and the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory for decades in violation of international law. ... From Chile we will urge firmly in all spaces for peace, recognizing the right to exist of both States, Israel and Palestine, and of the peoples who inhabit it to have a dignified and safe life.

He was followed by others from his ruling alliance that includes the Stalinist Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and his own Broad Front, the most noteworthy being the comments of Communist legislator Carmen Hertz.

According to Hertz, "adherence to the Palestinian cause, to its justice and desires, does not prevent us from condemning categorically, without ambiguity, without any relativization whatsoever, the massacre, rape and kidnapping of Israeli civilians by the Hamas group." That the accusations of rape, the beheading of infants, caging of children and other libels against the Palestinians have proven to be IDF propaganda did not compel Hertz to set right her self-righteous rebuke.

On October 12, the pseudo-left government also prohibited a March for Peace in Santiago called by the Palestinian Solidarity Committee, forcing the humanitarian organization to demand that its "right to free expression and our commitment to non-violence" be respected and urging "the national and international community to be attentive to this situation and to support our demand for fair and equitable treatment and our legitimate right to free expression in Chile."

The reasons for the pseudo-left government's position are twofold. Firstly, whereas some states in Latin America are attempting to straddle between the imperialist powers and the Chinese and Russian-dominated BRICS amid the ever-deepening fissures within the US-dominated world capitalist order, the Boric government has openly tied itself to the strategic foreign policy objectives of the Biden Administration.

Since coming to power in March 2022, Boric has been on key with

the US State Department talking points, railing against Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba for not meeting up to Washington's "democratic" standards while aligning with the imperialist war drive against Russia, to the point of inviting President Volodymyr Zelensky to address the Chilean Congress on the virtues of Ukraine's Nazi-infested "democracy."

Less publicized is the country's deepening ties with the Pentagon. For a decade US Southern Command has held annual joint exercises in Chile and across the region with all the branches of the Chilean Armed Forces. This past April, the Army carried out the Fused Response war games to deal with "regional security challenges," followed by joint Air Force special operations exercises held in August, and most recently joint Naval operations in late September.

US Army Gen. Laura J. Richardson, SOUTHCOM commander since 2021, has taken the lead in pushing Washington's pivot to Latin America and has made it her mission to arrest Chinese strategic influence in American imperialism's "own backyard" by any means, while at the same time preparing the region's militaries to deal with the ongoing insecurity and instability caused by obscene levels of poverty and social inequality.

She elaborated, if somewhat unintelligibly, on this diplomatic, propaganda, economic and military strategy at a meeting held last Wednesday by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a think tank "focused on national security and foreign policy."

"I've been working, you know, really hard to, you know, not just pressurize our abilities and—from the military perspective, you know, and military equipment and helping their militaries and their public security forces. Number one, that's, you know, how we build a strong deterrence, is through the strength of all of us together." Earlier in April she explained that in SOUTHCOM's exercises, "the goal is to work together to strengthen us and also to increase interoperability. It's very important that we communicate, that we work so closely that we can finish each other's sentences. That's how close we want to understand each other."

Seventy-five years ago, at the height of the Cold War, the Pentagon initiated similar joint operations for similar reasons. Imperialist counter-insurgency operations against the Algerian, Vietnamese and other independence struggles became the basis for training Latin America's rabidly anti-communist officer corp and its future dictators at Fort Benning and in Panama in the doctrines of National Security.

By 1973, that is 50 years ago, more than half the Chilean military officers had been through US training when it overthrew the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende and unleashed counterrevolutionary terror against a working class betrayed by its own leaders in the Popular Unity Alliance brought to power three years earlier.

The second reason is intimately linked to the first. Increasingly, the government of Gabriel Boric is responding to legitimate social and democratic demands of the population with the same authoritarian and police-state measures that have made Israel infamous and which governments internationally are turning towards.

As the WSWS has noted, Boric is preparing the "legal" justifications for repression in anticipation of a revolutionary eruption over fundamental and unresolved questions such as the right to housing and land tenure by sponsoring a bill that criminalizes school and workplace occupations as well as all forms of land seizures, including by the homeless.

The bill, which not only imposes hefty jail terms, but grants property owners the right to use lethal force in defense of private property,

particularly targets the indigenous Mapuche communities, the most marginalized population in Chile since the genocidal dispossession of the Pacification Wars of the late 19th century.

Mapuche communities, which for decades have sought to reclaim ancestral lands in southern Chile, daily suffer persecution and intimidation, mass indiscriminate arrests and deaths while in custody at the hands of Chile's murderous Carabineros police and military.

The virtually permanent presence of the state apparatus in indigenous communities, deployed by Boric in May 2022, is just the sharpest expression of what the Chilean ruling class has in store for the whole working class. Along with the anti-usurpation law, Boric is also proposing to revamp anti-terror laws routinely applied by the military dictatorship, as well as a plethora of other anti-democratic and police state measures.

None of this would be possible without the duplicitous role of the so-called "lefts" like long-time Stalinist operative Carmen Hertz. Most if not all the reactionary and anti-working class legislation has had their backing.

Hertz, 78, made her name as a human rights lawyer during the military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet after her partner, Carlos Berger, was killed in 1973 by the Caravan of Death, a death squad created by Pinochet to summarily execute his regime's left-wing opponents in the provinces. Berger was one of hundreds who were "disappeared" not once, but twice, first buried in a clandestine grave, only to be later exhumed and have his remains thrown into the Pacific.

Today, the pseudo-left cynically capitalizes on this horrific past to further integrate themselves into the capitalist state and play an indispensable part in safeguarding bourgeois rule.

The government's eagerness to accommodate deeply authoritarian and anti-democratic political forces cannot be overstated. The pseudo-left and the Stalinists are both part of "team capitalism" but perform different functions according to a political division of labor. The Stalinists posture as the guardians of "human rights" and regularly attack imperialism and the putschist right. But when capitalism is threatened, they line up behind it.

Therein lie the reasons for the Boric administration's defense of Israel's latest war crimes.



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